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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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Subject: "Grain Dishes IN WARTIME MEALS." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Even though the war has caused a shortage in some foods, grain foods are still plentiful. People are already eating more bread than they have in recent years. But the nutritionists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture point out, bread is not the only way to use grains in family meals.

Of course all the breakfast cereals are grain foods, whether you serve them hot or cold, as ready-to-eat flakes or puffs or in some other shape. But you can use all these breakfast cereals in other meals, too, and in ways that make them seem quite different from breakfast mush or porridge. When the family is used to a hot cereal every morning for breakfast, don't have the same kind of cereal at another meal. And disguise the cereal you do have, so the meals won't seem monotonous.

Let's run through some of the possibilities for the different grains served at other meals than breakfast. The four leading grains are wheat, rice, corn, and oats. Some people also use barley as a food grain and put it in soups and meat loaves. Some use rye flour in light bread and quick breads, and buckwheat flour in pancakes, but these grains are not as widely used as wheat, corn, rice and oats. And whenever you can use any of these four in whole-grain form, you increase the vitamin and mineral values of the dish you make.

To begin with, you can make several delicious and substantial soups containing a large amount of grain to give them body. Oatmeal and potato soup is a good example. You cook oatmeal in double the usual amount of water, then add as much diced potato as you had dry rolled oats, and cook until the potatoes are

tender.. Brown one or two or two chopped onions in a small amount of meat drippings that will give added flavor, and put in the soup. Season with salt and pepper, and, if you like, a cupful or so of your own home-canned tomatoes. A soup like this is hearty enough for a main dish. All it needs to round out a meal is a salad and a dessert. You can make a whole wheat and onion soup in much the same way. When you have lamb bones, make a thick Scotch broth. There are several other cereal-thickened soups.

You use grains as part of the main dish in many meat stretching recipes. Rice is good in a meat or fish hash. You spread a meat or chicken curry over a bed of rice and let the pungent-flavored gravy go all through it. The rice in a chop suey serves the same purpose. Corn meal is the cereal basis for a number of dishes where a little meat or cheese goes a long way...polenta and tamales are examples. An easy way to make the equivalent of tamales without the corn shucks is to line a baking dish with corn meal mush, then put in a layer of any kind of chopped cooked meat mixed with canned tomatoes, season well, cover with more corn meal mush and bake about half an hour until the top is lightly browned.

Most people mix bread crumbs with chopped meat in making a meat loaf, but you can use cooked rice or hominy grits equally well. Scrapple is a mixture of corn meal and pork trimmings cooked together in pork broth, and highly seasoned. The pork broth jellies the mixture when you chill it in a bread tin so you can cut off slices for frying.

And don't forget the stuffings, made from grain foods -- stuffings for poultry, meat, fish or vegetables. The stuffing in a chicken or turkey not only tastes good, but makes other foods go farther. Stuffed vegetables like stuffed green peppers or egg plant are usually so filling that you can use them for main dishes. But the stuffing needn't always be bread. Cooked rice or oatmeal or even hominy grits make good stuffing.



Another way of using grains in the main part of a meal is to put leftover cooked breakfast cereal in a mold, let it chill and then slice it. Dip the slices in flour or bread crumbs, and brown them in a very little fat. Serve as a side dish with meat or fish, or use for a dessert with sirup or honey or preserves.

Coming to desserts, you have quite a range of choice among grain desserts. Any grain flavored with vanilla and sweetened, makes a filling and nourishing dessert with a fruit sauce over it. Baked Indian pudding is corn meal mush cooked with molasses and served hot. You can add raisins if you like. Of course cornstarch puddings and pie fillings and sauces made with cornstarch are grain desserts.

You may never have thought of bread pudding as a grain dessert. But bread is made from flour, that is made from wheat. Scalloped fruit and fruit betties might be considered cousins of plain bread pudding.

Include griddlecakes and waffles among your grain dessert possibilities, too, since they use whole-grains sometimes as well as different kinds of flour. In fact, cooked cereal with some flour and the other usual ingredients makes very good pancakes indeed...rice pancakes are particularly good.

You have no doubt made cookies or confections from many of the precooked flaked or puffed cereals, including popcorn. The manufacturers of some of these ready-to-eat breakfast cereals furnish recipes for sweets of this kind in which you can use honey or sirup rather than sugar.

All in all, the grains have many and varied uses for you to try in war-time meals.

